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RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY 0372  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1049  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 004324

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SUBJECT: FARC OFFICIAL RODRIGO GRANDA LIKELY TO END UP IN VENEZUELA

Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Catholic priest Dario Echeverri said the GOC's release of unofficial FARC "Foreign Minister" Rodrigo Granda will not lead to any advances on a humanitarian exchange in the short-term, but could be helpful in the long-term. He said the GOC is working to arrange Granda's travel to Cuba with the understanding that he would later continue on to Caracas. Granda continues to reside at the Catholic Bishop's administrative offices in Bogota. End Summary

¶2. (C) Unofficial FARC "Foreign Minister" Rodrigo Granda remains housed at the Catholic Bishop's administrative offices in Bogota. Catholic priest and Conciliation Commission member Dario Echeverri told polcouns June 13 that Granda cannot do anything in his current situation to advance a humanitarian exchange or broader GOC-FARC peace talks. The only thing he can do in Bogota is "avoid burning himself with the FARC." Still, it is important to get him out of Colombia with his credibility intact with the GOC, FARC and international community, since he could play a useful role in the future. Echeverri said FARC Secretariat member and international spokesperson Raul Reyes and Granda are very close; three years ago Reyes told Echeverri "to keep Granda in reserve as a last channel of communications."

¶3. (C) Echeverri said he and Monsignor Castro attended Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo's June 8 meeting with Granda in which Granda asked to be allowed to return to Caracas and to meet with the FARC Secretariat. President Uribe approved both requests. Echeverri said Restrepo is following up with Cuban leader Raul Castro to see if Cuba would receive Granda with the understanding that he would later continue on to Caracas. Uribe would call President Chavez to obtain his support. Echeverri said the arrangements for Granda's departure could be completed as early as June 16. At Granda's request, Echeverri would accompany him to Havana.

¶4. (C) Echeverri said Granda's repeated press conferences are a "self-defense mechanism" to maintain his value and position with the FARC. Still, Echeverri has cautioned Granda that too much public exposure will undermine the "myth" of his importance. Echeverri said the more Granda talks to the press, the more painfully apparent are his personal

limitations and the basic incoherence of his position.

15. (C) Echeverri doubts the FARC will react positively to the GOC's initiative in the short-term, but said it is important that the group has not disavowed Granda. Neither the GOC nor the FARC is motivated by humanitarian concerns regarding the hostages; both are playing politics. Echeverri said Uribe already got what he wanted with the G-8 statement of support.

Uribe has also forestalled possible pressure by French President Sarkozy and other European leaders to accede to FARC demands for a demilitarized zone. Still, Echeverri reiterated that Granda's release could be useful in the future. He said the Church's role in Granda's release has helped position it as a serious, credible, and "unconditional" interlocutor with both the GOC and the FARC. This is key since the Church has had difficulties communicating with both over the last three years.  
Drucker